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Tuesday, 16 October 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Edjo Memba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Root causes of conflict — the role of natural resources

Letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2018/901)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Root causes of conflict — the role of natural resources

Letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2018/901)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/901, which contains a letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and to give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank the Bolivian presidency for convening this debate.

The exploitation of natural resources, or competition over them, can and does lead to violent conflict. Preventing, managing and resolving such conflicts is one of the major and growing challenges of our time. United Nations studies show that more than 40 per cent of internal armed conflicts over the past 60 years have been linked to natural resources. With the increasing impacts of climate change evident in all regions, the risks are only going to grow.

Other global trends, such as a growing population, increasing consumption and environmental degradation, are also placing significant and potentially unsustainable pressures on the availability of many natural resources. These include oil, gas, minerals, water and land. The unfair distribution of natural resources, and corruption and mismanagement, can and do lead to conflict, especially in countries with weaker institutions. These pressures can also exacerbate existing ethnic or religious divides within societies and across borders.

Since 1990, 75 per cent of civil wars in Africa have been partially funded by revenues from natural resources. The illegal extraction of minerals, timber, charcoal and wildlife has fuelled violence in a number of regions. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it has generated almost a billion dollars in revenue for rebels and criminal groups. Likewise, in the Central African Republic the illicit exploitation of minerals by numerous armed groups and militias has contributed to sustaining and prolonging the conflict.

More needs to be done to regulate the provenance, sale and trade of minerals through cooperative arrangements involving civil society, Governments and regional and international organizations. A positive example is the Kimberley Process, which succeeded in reducing the trade in conflict diamonds. Through certified extraction, production and fair trade practices, and with a focus on aiding local communities, lawlessness can be countered and tangible benefits brought to conflict-affected populations.

It is also worth emphasizing that shared natural resources have traditionally also been a catalyst for cooperation among States, communities and people. Mutual benefits generally act as an incentive for sustained peaceful dialogue, which in turn can generate cooperation and understanding in other areas. For example, benefit-sharing on water resources has a long history among the riparian States of the Senegal River basin. In South America, Lake Titicaca, the largest freshwater lake on the continent, has long been a source of cooperation between Bolivia and Peru. And, from my own experience, the Albufeira Convention, agreed during my time as Prime Minister of Portugal, continues to promote good relations and cooperation on water management between Portugal and Spain.

In Central Asia, progress is being achieved in the area of transboundary water management through ongoing consultations among Central Asian States, supported by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy. In Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission is working to reinforce peace and stability through the development of a land-disputes project to promote confidence-building among communities and increase inclusivity. In the Lake Chad basin, cooperation on water has also played a critical role in bringing countries together to address the broader challenges to the region.

In short, the United Nations recognizes the potential for the shared management of natural resources as a means for preventing conflict and enhancing regional cooperation for peace and sustainable development. To that end, we have taken note of Member States' call for a greater focus on these issues, including recently through the adoption of Security Council resolutions on Lake Chad, Somalia and Darfur, as well as a presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2018/16). In response, we are taking a number of actions.

First, the Organization is seeking to strengthen our capacity to address the growing threat of climate-related security risks. This includes a new joint initiative involving the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Secondly, we intend to maximize opportunities to use mediation over natural resources as a tool for conflict prevention, in cooperation with Member States, regional partners and international financial institutions. For example, the High-level Panel on Water, which I convened together with the President of the World Bank Group, has helped galvanize action around hydro-diplomacy.

Thirdly, we will further strengthen our partnership with regional and subregional organizations to work on ways to increase attention to building the capacities of national and local actors to prevent and respond to conflicts with natural resource dimensions. As part of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, I welcome the ongoing collaboration between our respective organizations to support the Panel of the Wise in its efforts to improve the prevention, mediation and resolution of conflicts over natural resources in Africa.

Fourthly, we are seeking to strengthen the capacity of women's networks and organizations to effectively engage in dialogue and mediation processes around natural resources and the environment, including in the context of climate change. That initiative — co-led by the UN-Women, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the Peacebuilding Support Office — has already supported indigenous and Afro-Colombian women in Colombia in processes related to natural-resource use, ownership, governance and benefit-sharing.

Fifthly, we also recognize that issues relating to land remain a critical factor. Following an initial scoping study in 2016 conducted by UN-Habitat, I have recently finalized a guidance note to ensure greater strategic convergence across the United Nations system to help address issues of land and conflict.

Once again, let me thank the Bolivian presidency for today's timely debate. There is a lot of work to be done on this critical issue, and if we address it effectively, we will go a long way towards creating a safe and sustainable world for everyone, now and in future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his interesting and extensive briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his briefing today, and we take this opportunity once again to reiterate our support for his important work.

The twentieth century is characterized by the strengthening of multilateralism as a fundamental component of relations among States and respect for the basic norms of international law, built on the basis of treaties that establish rights and duties that we mutually accept within the framework of the exercise of our sovereignty, with the objective, among other things, of protecting the most vulnerable from encroachment, misappropriation and depredation by the most powerful. The current conflicts arising in different parts of the world show us that behind many international or local geopolitical disputes is also almost always an interest in access to and the control and exploitation of economically attractive natural resources, which is reflected in the fact that according to the Secretary-General's report published by the United Nations Environment Programme, over the past 60 years at least 40 per cent of conflicts have been motivated by this reason. In many cases, when control, exploitation or access to oil, gas, water, minerals or other natural resources becomes a strategic objective of the parties to the conflict or of armed groups and criminal organizations, it is because behind them there are often also multinational corporations or foreign interests willing to use them to gain access to these resources.

Some examples very close to the concerns of the Security Council, just to mention a few from throughout the history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, are the coup d'état against Iran in 1953, undertaken against a democratically elected Government that, in the exercise of its sovereignty, had nationalized oil from the hands of an Anglo-American company; the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 by Iraq, whose intention was to control 20 per cent of world oil production; the conflict in Libya, where parties are constantly clashing over control of the country's hydrocarbon industry and which is also affecting the entire Sahel region; the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003, whose objective was, in the end, to control oil production and the oil market; and the involvement of various armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a result of the illegal trade in tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold.

In other cases, when sovereign policies of the States over their natural resources affect the interests of corporations or of some other countries that form part of the chain of industrialization or commercialization of the resources, these corporations have no qualms about financing separatist movements, arming opposition groups or provoking policies of change of regime to establish Governments in line with their interests. The history of the twentieth century in many countries in my own region is a clear example of this.

We believe that it is not enough to monitor and punish armed groups, their heads as individuals, or the parties to the conflict; it is also necessary to make sanctions regime more dynamic and effective. To do this, we must apply sanctions to the networks that make up the entire chain of those involved in the conflict. In the case of conflicts related to natural resources, sanctions should also be applied to what we may term commercial enablers, which in large part are composed of large transnational companies that enable the commercialization of natural resources that have been obtained illegally or in conflict situations as well as for their insertion into global markets. Sanctions should also apply to what we may term financial facilitators, composed of financial corporations and tax havens, which allow for the insertion and legitimatization of profits derived from the commercialization of these resources into the global financial system. Accordingly, the Security Council must reformulate the mandates of the subsidiary bodies dealing with sanctions, so that the panels of experts have a mandate to investigate and identify these corporations, affecting or definitively shutting down these criminal networks. With the results of these investigations, the Council should be able to impose sanctions on such networks.

It is important to fight not only the illegal exploitation and misappropriation of natural resources, but also the unequal distribution of the benefits resulting from their commercialization, which can make them catalysts that exacerbate conflicts. The Bolivian State has faced these scenarios throughout its history. A clear example of this goes back to the nineteenth century, when the exploitation of natural resources by foreign corporate interests drove an asymmetrical and expansionist war in the region that deeply affected my country. These foreign interests were replicated during much of the twentieth century and translated into the privatization and exploitation of our natural wealth — water, silver, tin, oil and gas — for the benefit of transnational corporations, leaving only tiny royalties for the development and well-being of our people.

I would simply like to try to show what has been done in Bolivia with respect to this issue. In 2006, the State decided to nationalize the country's natural resources, which were recognized through the Constitution adopted in 2009 as the direct, indivisible and irrevocable property and dominion of the Bolivian people, under the administration of the State in accordance with the collective interest. This mandate allowed the recovery of the natural resources of strategic companies from the hands of the companies that had exploited them to the detriment of the interests of our people.

An example of how sovereign control of our resources changed the course and development of Bolivia can be seen in the social and economic changes that my country has been experiencing for the past 12 years. It is no lie to say that before that time, my country's presidents would go to the International Monetary Fund or the Paris Club almost as beggars to ask for economic assistance just to be able to pay the salaries of our teachers or doctors. Twelve years ago, the dynamics of the distribution of profits for hydrocarbon exploitation sent 82 per cent of them to transnational companies and only 18 per cent to the benefit of the country. Since our resources were nationalized, 82 percent now remains in the hands of the Bolivian people and 18 per cent goes to the service contracts of the transnational companies that remain in the country because they still make healthy profits.

Hydrocarbon revenues in Bolivia increased from $2.9 billion for the period between 1994 and 2005 to $35.2 billion for the period between 2006 and 2017. Bolivia's gross domestic product also grew steadily. In 2017, it was 4.82 per cent, well above the regional average of 1.87 per cent, and our gross domestic product rose from $9 billion in 2005 to $36 billion in 2017. Our international reserves increased from $1.7 billion to $10 billion between 2005 and 2018.

In the past 12 years, this new flow of income and its redistribution has enabled us to reduce extreme poverty from 37 per cent in 2005 to 17 per cent today, and to shrink inequality. In 2005, the richest 10 per cent owned 128 times more than the poorest 10 per cent, whereas in 2017, and today, that figure has been reduced to only 47 times more. Public investment increased from $620 million in 2005 to $5.5 billion in 2017. Some 3 million people in a country of 11 million joined the middle class, which grew from 35 per cent of the population in 2005 to 58 per cent in 2017. The infant mortality rate dropped by more than half between 2008 and 2017. The number of medical and health facilities doubled. Life expectancy increased from 63 years in 2005 to 72 years in 2018. The school dropout rate fell from 4.5 per cent in 2005 to 2 per cent in 2017. I understand that this subject is not one that is inextricably linked to peace and security-related issues, but the sovereign control of natural resources enables fairer and more human societies to be built.

In conclusion, and using the words of President Evo Morales when he spoke at the General Assembly in 2015 (see A/70/PV.15), we believe that the Council must reflect in the future on the following before taking decisions based on various contexts. President Morales said that we are living in times of peace, not times of invasion or domination. We must therefore ask ourselves, who benefits from wars? After interventions, who retains control over natural resources? Who governs — our citizens, or foreign interests that promote wars for their own benefit? Those questions can help to a certain extent as we begin today's debate.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): As I begin my statement, which I am making on behalf of the three African countries that are non-permanent members of the Security Council — Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia — I would like to thank the Bolivian presidency for convening today's briefing on the role of natural resources in armed conflicts. On their behalf, I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for his briefing and relevant analysis of the correlation between natural resources and the conflicts that impact the African continent with particular virulence.

Although the importance of natural resources for economic growth and development in Africa is well-known, their control is a considerable challenge for countries that appear to be vulnerable or affected by instability and armed conflict. Over the past decades, regrettably the African continent has been a theatre for many armed conflicts, which have resulted in unprecedented mass atrocities and humanitarian crises. Originally begun for sociopolitical reasons, several crises in Africa have subsequently morphed into armed clashes for the control and exploitation of vast territories rich in natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, oil and timber. Because such resources also fuel the majority of the conflicts on our continent, they clearly have an adverse impact on peace, stability and economic and social development. Indeed, the lack of governance and an inequitable distribution of natural-resource dividends are key factors in the outbreak, funding and continuation of armed conflicts. The issue of access, control and distribution of natural resources therefore appears to be a major underlying cause of the conflicts that persist in Africa.

The current challenges in finding a peaceful solution to crises in the Central African Republic and Libya, as well as to those that resulted in bloodshed in Liberia and Sierra Leone, clearly demonstrate the unavoidable nature of armed conflicts that are fuelled by the pillaging of natural resources by armed groups. In its concern about conflict prevention and resolution in Africa, the African Union (AU) has placed its focus squarely on the issue of the link between conflicts and natural resources, which has been at the centre of many Peace and Security Council meetings focused on the close correlation between violent conflicts and the illegal exploitation of natural resources in Africa and the ways and means to address it.

The responses to the challenges raised by natural resources in conflict prevention and resolution must be based on strategies that enable better management of access to natural resources, and on the strengthening

of national and international control mechanisms in order to prevent them from being used as a means of financing conflicts. Discussions within the Peace and Security Council have therefore highlighted the need to put in place effective national strategies for the management of natural resources, in order to ensure that income is used not to fuel conflicts but rather to benefit local communities. In that way, they become an important asset for the sustainable economic and social development of our States rather than a factor of instability.

Furthermore, while it is undeniable that many conflicts in Africa are fuelled by poor governance and trafficking in natural resources, it is also important to highlight and strongly denounce the involvement of actors from outside the continent who benefit from the exploitation and illegal trade of resources. Those actors at the margins of armed conflicts jeopardizing the development of our continent, as is rightly pointed out by the Bolivian presidency in today's concept paper (S/2018/901, annex), are generally armed groups or multinational companies, international financial networks or foreign interests whose actions promote the outbreak of violent conflicts and ongoing instability in regions rich in natural resources.

We believe that it is the Council's responsibility to take appropriate measures, in accordance with the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, to ensure the preservation of the sovereignty of States in the management of their natural resources. In our opinion, every State must have the sovereign right to control and use its natural resources in accordance with the principles of international law and good governance. The Security Council must also strengthen its role in combating the illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources in areas where they contribute to the outbreak and continuation of armed conflicts.

Today's meeting also gives us the opportunity to highlight another major challenge facing our continent — illicit financial flows related to the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources. Such illicit flows, due to their scale, have a negative impact on the continent's ongoing development and governance programmes. According to some estimates, they could reach $50 billion per year, about twice the amount of official development assistance to Africa. In reality, such estimates cannot help but reflect a larger phenomenon, given the lack of accurate data on all illicit transactions on the African continent. It is therefore imperative to ensure the effective and transparent management and equitable distribution of natural resources in order to safeguard the interests of the country concerned and the well-being of its people. Equity, transparency and accountability in the management of natural resources are therefore essential to conflict prevention and the promotion of sustainable development in Africa.

We recognize and welcome the efforts of the international community to improve the international legal framework for the use of and trade in natural resources. They have resulted in the establishment of relevant standards through instruments such as the Kimberley Process and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. For its part, the African Union adopted the African Mining Vision in February 2009, which calls on the AU Commission to integrate the peace and security dimension of natural resources into conflict-prevention and early-warning mechanisms, conflict management and peacebuilding policies and programmes. It is also important to highlight the work of the African Union High-Level Panel, chaired by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa, whose report contained useful recommendations on addressing the complex issue of illicit capital flows from Africa.

Despite the efforts being made, the expected results will be effective only if there is close cooperation with external actors, including multinationals involved in the exploitation of natural resources. We believe that ensuring greater control of supply and marketing chains and accountability for individuals, groups or multinationals involved in the illegal trade in natural resources is also essential. In addition, it is more important than ever that international partners, transnational corporations, the private sector, civil-society organizations and all stakeholders support the promotion of transparency, equity and development-oriented natural resource governance. That is key to conflict prevention and resolution on the continent.

Our Council has used various tools to address the links between natural resources and conflict, including natural-resources sanctions, ranging from a diamond and timber embargo to a ban on charcoal exports and maritime measures prohibiting illegal oil exports. The report produced by Security Council Report is an excellent research tool that provides a useful analysis of the conception and implementation of these sanctions regimes. It is urgent that we take stock of the lessons learned from the implementation of these measures in

order to strengthen the Council's role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts linked to natural resources.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of this meeting and Bolivia's initiative to raise the critical issue of natural resources and their link to the root causes of conflict, as well as the important briefing given by Secretary-General António Guterres.

As a country that is rich in natural resources, Peru appreciates the fact that they play a crucial role in its growth and development. However, we are also aware that the exploitation of these resources and access to their respective markets have historically been decisive factors in the outbreak of conflicts in various parts of the world. The potential of these resources to either generate prosperity or have an undesirable impact leads us to reiterate the importance of being able to rely on inclusive and accountable institutions, as well as the rule of law, in order to prevent conflicts by addressing their root causes and promoting sustainable development in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This also requires a rules-based order that guarantees the predictability of international trade and the stability of financial markets in order to avoid the boom-and-bust cycles to which countries that export primary materials are particularly vulnerable and that often degenerate into conflict situations.

It is clear that such matters go beyond the Council's remit. Nevertheless, we believe it important for this organ to acknowledge and demonstrate its relevance in the maintenance of international peace and security so that these issues can be addressed from a preventive, multidimensional approach that focuses on the root causes, as predicated by the concept of sustainable peace.

For example, in assessing the impacts that mining industries may generate, it is important to maintain an inclusive dialogue among the State, the private sector and the communities potentially affected by such projects. We also consider it important that mining industries contribute to local development by creating and strengthening capacities, transferring technology, offering decent employment opportunities for the population living in the areas in which they operate, increasing the local content of the goods and services produced, and ensuring economic inclusion while respecting traditional ways of life.

All these aspects, which are linked to the sustainable management of natural resources, are critical to effectively combating poverty and human vulnerability, and to preventing perceptions of corruption and injustice that are then exploited by interested actors to radicalize disgruntled sectors of the population. In many contemporary conflicts, we have seen how such perceptions have facilitated the development of militias, which exercise illegal control over natural resources. This often leads to situations of anarchy in which serious violations of human rights and major deterioration of the environment are usually observed.

We must especially bear in mind that such dynamics are facilitated and even encouraged by the links that illegal extractors of natural resources often establish with criminal organizations in order to access international markets, launder illicitly acquired wealth and obtain weapons. In the light of such vicious circles, we believe that the sanctions committees of the Council should pay special attention to illicit trafficking networks dealing in natural resources emanating from countries affected by conflict and the corresponding illegal flows. This is in line with the presidential statement S/PRST/2007/22 of June 2007.

We also believe that the missions deployed under Security Council mandates to countries rich in natural resources can help the respective national authorities to prevent and combat the illegal exploitation of their resources. In the same vein, we believe that in countries in transition to post-conflict situations, the Peacebuilding Commission and United Nations country teams should be able to support national authorities in strengthening the institutions required to manage their resources sustainably. These measures are relevant in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was recently visited by the Council and is especially rich in natural resources that, far from promoting development, have led since colonial times to cycles of violence and conflict that must come to an end.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank you, Sir, for calling this meeting on today's important topic. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and participation in today's meeting.

The link between natural resources and conflict is complex, and the United States shares the concern that in many instances, as noted by the Secretary-General, the poor management of natural resources by Governments can contribute to corruption, conflict and violence. It is unfortunate that today's Council

briefing has been deliberately framed to ignore internal State mismanagement of natural resources. Despite the potential for natural resource endowments to bring prosperity and social development when properly managed, we unfortunately see far too many examples of countries where natural resource wealth does not translate into improved livelihoods for citizens.

Nowhere are the dangers — indeed, threats to peace and security — posed by the mismanagement of natural resources more apparent than in Venezuela, where millions of citizens of that once wealthy country have been driven into poverty by the rapacious corruption of a kleptocratic regime. Instead of serving as a source of wealth to improve the livelihoods of Venezuela's citizens, the State-owned oil company Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. exists today primarily as a vehicle for embezzlement and looting by Maduro and his inner circle. This has created a situation of scarcity and economic instability that has generated massive refugee migration flows. With its oil sector in decline, Maduro's regime has turned to another valuable resource to plunder, Venezuela's gold deposits.

In Venezuela's mining regions, illegal and unregulated mining is now resulting in rapid deforestation and pollution, without regard for the environment or the indigenous populations. We have no doubt that the proceeds from this illicit mining are lining the pockets primarily of Maduro and those closest to him. The effects of the crisis in Venezuela extend far beyond its national borders and the resulting humanitarian crisis has placed the burden on the entire region.

Similarly, in Iran we see the country's rich endowment of natural resources siphoned away from activities that could benefit the Iranian people and used both to enrich Iran's elite and to fund Iran's destabilizing activities abroad. Iran has used the proceeds of its oil and gas trade to build missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, increase internal repression, finance terrorism and fund destabilizing activities in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. For these reasons, we are working with countries that import Iranian crude oil to cut their purchases substantially, and we are pleased that so many countries and companies are moving to stop such imports.

In South Sudan, the Government has been collateralizing future oil sales to secure foreign loans in violation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed in 2015, and the revitalized peace agreement signed last month. The money has been used not to feed the people but rather, again, to enrich elites and extend the conflict, including attacks on innocent civilians.

In the cases of Venezuela, Iran and South Sudan, the destabilizing effects of natural resources are not the result of the activity of external armed groups, multinational companies or foreign interests; rather, they are the direct result of decisions taken by the leaders of those countries to engage in corruption and/or use the proceeds from their natural resource wealth to fund destabilizing activities that threaten international peace and security.

There are steps we can take as a Council to improve our chances of ensuring that natural resource wealth translates into greater prosperity. For example, the United States supports the Kimberley Process as a constructive international initiative that fosters transparency in the diamond trade and has contributed to a marked reduction in — in fact, almost the complete elimination of — the trade of conflict diamonds since its establishment. We support meaningful reform of the Kimberley Process to ensure its long-term health and relevance. Specifically, at this year's plenary session we will seek an expanded definition of a conflict diamond to include diamonds linked to conflict or violence, regardless of the perpetrator.

Finally, United Nations sanctions regimes remain a critical tool for addressing the destabilizing impact of the trade in illicit resources. As members of the international community, States must do more to strengthen the implementation of United Nations sanctions regimes that seek to eliminate trade in natural resources that contribute to conflict. If we work together to cut off those flows and support cooperative efforts to improve the oversight of natural resources, together we can help prevent natural resource-related issues from contributing to conflict.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to express its sincere thanks to Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing. We thank the Bolivian presidency for convening this briefing on a critical topic, which the Security Council has discussed only once since 2013 (see S/PV.6982).

Over the decades, we have seen that the control and exploitation of and access to natural resources have

contributed to fuelling armed conflict. There are many steps that the Council and the United Nations can take to tackle the issue and to promote the use of natural resources for sustainable peace. Allow me to focus on the role of natural resources in three phases of the conflict cycle: in preventing conflicts through adequate risk assessment; during a conflict through transparency and accountability; and in building sustainable peace.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands consistently calls for adequate risk assessments and analyses of all root causes and threat multipliers. That is as relevant for natural resources as it is for climate change and water stress. Activists and affected communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have called attention to the links between that country's mineral wealth and its protracted armed conflicts. It is important that such calls find their way to the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and that our future actions be based on adequate risk assessments and analyses. We commend the Secretary-General for his efforts in that area and look forward to hearing more from the Secretariat during the Arria Formula meeting on water, peace and security to be held later this month. We must ensure that conflict-, gender- and climate-sensitive mandates take the availability, extraction and governance of natural resources into account.

With regard to my second point, concerning accountability and transparency, natural resources are a broad concept, and it would be a mistake to solely focus on extractive industries. There are several lessons learned with regard to accountability and transparency. Like the Secretary-General, I would like to mention the Kimberley Process. The multi-stakeholder approach of the Kimberly Process was successful in reducing the trade in blood diamonds. It facilitates cooperation among Governments, the private sector, producers of rough diamonds, traders, watchdogs and non-governmental organizations.

The Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights form a basis for collaborating with the private sector to ensure that human rights violations and bribery, for example, are adequately addressed in conflict and high-risk areas. We expect all companies to undertake due diligence to contribute to responsible sourcing and production. The illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources remain root causes of violence in ongoing conflicts such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia and Libya. In line with that, there is also an imperative role for Governments to play. Governments must choose to dismantle war economies and economies of predation in which the trade of natural resources is used to finance the interests of a few rather than the interests of many. The gains of ending the conflict and dismantling networks should be seen as more important than utilizing the networks of ivory traffickers, gold and diamond smugglers and mineral dealers to earn a profit. We must change the cost-benefit equation. In that context, what can the Council do? It can act with regard to dismantling those networks. Tools such as adequate reporting and political pressure must be utilized.

The illegal trade in natural resources should be grounds for sanctions, as revenues from illegal exploitation and trade are used to destabilize countries. Political will, however, is absolutely necessary to do that. The Council must also continue to evaluate and build on experiences from peacekeeping operations, such as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, both of which play roles in combating the illegal exploitation of resources.

Natural resources are key to building sustainable peace. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace agenda underline the importance of adopting an integrated approach and of creating more inclusive societies. Governments need to take responsibility, be equipped to combat the illicit trade in and trafficking of natural resources and be able to manage their related industries. If Governments do not shoulder their responsibility, the Council has a responsibility to act. We know that the development of the responsible sourcing of and trading in natural resources contributes to creating decent jobs and, ultimately, to social and economic growth.

In conclusion, when looking at the role of natural resources in conflicts, it is imperative to do so throughout the conflict cycle. We call on the Council to call for appropriate risk assessments and analyses; to urge Member States to work with all the relevant stakeholders to address the issue; to take up the responsibility to act when required in combating the

threat; and to make use of the tools at its disposal to continue to build sustainable peace.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his participation and valuable briefing. We very much hope that today's discussion will raise our awareness of the link between natural resources and conflict. The concept note (S/2018/901, annex) sheds light on the close link between them, which the Security Council has discussed on two previous occasions (see S/PV.5705 and S/PV.6982). Nevertheless, we have seldom met to discuss that issue and to reach the necessary understanding and solutions, which shows that the Council does not see how dangerous it is and the threat that it poses to those experiencing its impact.

Conflicts caused by disputes over natural resources are no longer only among sovereign States, as was the case before and during the Cold War. Over the past three decades, we have witnessed many civil wars, primarily in developing countries. Such conflicts seem to be political in nature but the root causes are economic and social. The consequences have been catastrophic, and the Security Council has worked to settle such conflicts for many years, although some of them persist.

Since the adoption of resolution 1265 (1999) and presidential statement S/PRST/2007/22 on this topic, the Security Council has been able to shed light on several basic factors that supposedly help to limit and address that phenomenon. I will mention the most prominent of them: first, strengthening the role of peacekeeping troops by implementing adequate mandates to enable peacekeeping operations to help the Governments concerned prevent natural resources from being exploited illicitly; secondly, supporting regional initiatives to limit the dangers related to the exploitation of natural resources, such as the Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Great Lakes region, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the 2000 Kimberley Process, relating to blood diamonds, which has been a paradigm of cooperation; and thirdly, strengthening sanctions regimes by the Council, which must adopt *explicit mandates with specific terms of reference* for its panels of experts and monitoring teams so as to prevent the trafficking and illegal exploitation of natural resources. Nevertheless, preventive diplomacy based on dialogue and mediation, as well as arbitration, remains the best means to prevent conflicts, including those linked to claims pertaining to natural resources.

My country has been blessed with natural resources, and we know well that they can be linked to conflict. We experienced first-hand the catastrophic consequences of the disastrous occupation in 1990 on Kuwait and the countries of the world. Natural resources are not by themselves the only reason for conflicts and civil wars. The appropriate exploitation of natural resources could be the most important means for societies and countries to recover in the post-conflict period, leading to reconstruction and development.

History is full of examples of armed conflicts and civil wars resulting from the legal and illegal exploitation of natural resources, which fuelled them and were a reason for prolonging them. It is often the case that the exploitation of natural resources is the main reason for such conflicts and wars breaking out again. Natural resources are a divine blessing to be preserved but they can be used as weapons of war with serious consequences for the environment, the economy and public health at both local and regional level.

We have learned lessons from the environmental catastrophe that resulted from the Iraqi occupying forces setting fire to more than 1,000 Kuwaiti oil wells. That is an example of the misuse of natural resources and the environment during armed conflict. The State of Kuwait believes that such resources and the environment must not be used during armed conflict. For that reason, we proposed a draft resolution, which was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 56/4), for the annual observance of 6 November as the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict. Kuwait will also call for an Arria Formula meeting on 7 November in order to address preventing the use of the environment in armed conflict, as well as strengthening the international legal framework in that regard.

Poverty, hunger, inequality and the absence of good governance are among the most important reasons for the outbreak of conflicts, as mentioned by United Nations reports. We must look into the common factors that lead to tensions and cause the outbreak of conflicts. There are three economic indicators that we should consider: first, per capita income levels; secondly, the rate of economic growth; and thirdly, the structure of the economy.

There are fundamentals for building a stable State. It is important to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We must strengthen our national capacities and manage our economies effectively, using comprehensive strategies to fight corruption, build institutions, strengthen the rule of law and diversify the economy. The United Nations can assist States and establish partnerships with them in that regard.

Finally, we want to emphasize that every State has the sovereign and genuine right to control and to exploit its own natural resources according to the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Clearly, natural resources, if used well, can be a basic factor for long-term economic growth and sustainable development. The State of Kuwait believes that natural resources are a divine blessing for many States. They must be the driver of sustainable development, the prosperity of countries and the well-being of their people. Managing natural resources in a legal, transparent and sustainable way at the national level is a priority for Kuwait. We preserve our natural resources and exploit them in the right way, while maintaining the security of our State and its national economy in accordance with the Constitution.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank the Secretary-General for his insightful briefing, good analysis and, as always, action-oriented approach. We thank the Bolivian presidency for providing another important opportunity for us to discuss the root causes that lead to or may lead to conflict. For the Council to be effective in its preventive role and in sustaining peace, it is crucial that we better understand and address the underlying drivers of conflicts. The root causes are different depending on the context. They can include violations and abuses of human rights, gender inequality, poverty and weak governance and very often they are a combination of several or all of those factors.

In July, Sweden hosted a debate in the Council on climate-related security risks, focusing on climate as a driver of conflict (see S/PV.8307). It is closely related to the issue that we are discussing today and one of the conclusions drawn at that debate was on the need for the United Nations to better understand and analyse those risks. The same can be said of today's issue. We also welcome the upcoming Arria Formula meeting on water and security. All such steps aim to improve our track record in preventing conflicts.

Natural resources are clearly a driver of conflict in many contexts. While resources such as oil, natural gas and minerals have the potential to confer significant benefits on populations and to improve development outcomes, they can also fuel instability and violence. The research presented in the joint United Nations-World Bank report *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* suggests that 40 to 60 per cent of intra-State armed conflicts over the past 60 years have been triggered, funded or sustained by natural resources. During the recent Council trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as has been referred to by my Peruvian colleague, we saw first-hand how the rich natural resources there have largely yet to translate into greater prosperity and stability for the broader population in the areas where most of those riches are found. In Liberia, disputes related to land tenure have long been a key cause of conflict. The Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, which I chair, is therefore beginning to focus its work on the management of natural resources.

The United Nations system has a hugely important role in ensuring that natural resources are turned from the scourge of potential conflict into a common good for development, stability and prosperity. We truly appreciate the various actions set in motion by the Secretary-General, as outlined this morning, such as improved analysis and cooperation within the system, supporting regional cooperation and initiatives, strengthened mediation, including in hydro-diplomacy, offering capacity-building to countries, looking into the connection between land rights and conflicts and, of course, the general empowerment of women, including at the local level. Today I would like to point to three areas that can help to tap the opportunities and positive benefits of natural resources while mitigating the risks of them being a driver of conflict.

The first area is strengthening governance and national institutions. Natural resources are more likely to be a cause for conflict when there is a governance and public security vacuum. Functioning institutions to protect national interests, to uphold legal frameworks and to hold those operating outside the law accountable are therefore critical. Democratic and transparent national strategies for how natural resources are extracted and used are an equally important part of the equation. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as the Ambassador of Kuwait has just said, should be the logical starting point in that

regard. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 16, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions should be built at all levels. That includes tax and audit authorities that can develop fiscal policies and solid, trusted systems for public financial management.

The second area is fighting organized crime. Organized crime involving natural resources, for example through fuel smuggling and illicit mining, have become the largest source of income for non-State armed groups and international terrorist organizations. Those activities also contribute and are often connected to corruption and erode institutions and trust in the authorities, which in turn further spurs violence and violent extremism. Organized crime networks must therefore be forcefully addressed, including by enhancing the investigation and analysis of their linkages to the extractive industry. International cooperation and making full use of the United Nations tools on offer is recommended.

The third area is the important role of responsible business. The private sector has an important responsibility to make sure that business activities are sustainable and do not have a negative impact on conflict dynamics and basic human rights. To that end, businesses need to integrate corporate social responsibility models into their core operations. That requires dialogue with host Governments and, of course, civil society, including local communities.

African countries are now taking the lead in improving ownership models for extractive industries to better benefit their communities and citizens. We have just heard our colleague from Côte d'Ivoire talk about some of the African Union initiatives. Transparency is key to those efforts. There needs to be a better understanding of financial flows and banks have a particular responsibility, including at the international level. In that regard, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources should be supported. Governments should also be encouraged to develop national action plans for business and human rights. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Global Compact should serve as a basis for those efforts.

As is the case with many of the root causes of conflict, challenges linked to natural resources do not recognize borders. They therefore require a national, regional and international response. The United Nations system, as well as other international organizations and bilateral partners, can help countries to reap the positive benefits of natural resources and to move away from a conflict-driven, informal and unprotected economy towards a transparent formal economy that can generate decent jobs and provide for social services such as education and health.

The Security Council, for its part, needs to do a better job of assessing root causes and taking a more holistic approach to addressing the conflicts on its agenda. That includes assessing and addressing the issue of natural resources, as well as other root causes, in a more structured and proactive way. In order to do that, what the Council needs first and foremost is for the regular reporting from the Secretariat to include more integrated analysis of the drivers of conflict. Gender analysis is a key aspect, as women are important actors in addressing the drivers and root causes of conflict. But the Council must also follow up such information with action. When it is relevant, peacekeeping missions should be mandated and given appropriate resources to that effect so that they can manage such drivers of conflict better, in close partnership with the broader United Nations country teams and other relevant actors. Targeted measures, including sanctions on individuals and entities — or indeed certain goods — involved in fuelling conflicts through illicit trade should also be considered.

The Peacebuilding Commission, with its broad agenda and a wider range of stakeholders, is well placed to complement and contribute to Council efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict, including the issue of natural resources. The Commission can also take a regional approach, which is often needed when it comes to these borderless challenges. Actors such as the World Bank, civil society and of course the private sector can and should be invited to discussions that provide advice on action to the Security Council.

In conclusion, we fully support the Secretary-General's vision of putting conflict prevention and sustaining peace at the centre of what we do. Addressing the root causes of conflict effectively, including by improving the transparent management of natural resources in order to benefit people, is a crucial part of that vision.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Secretary-General for

participating personally in our meeting today and for his informative briefing on the subject.

The aspects that the Bolivian presidency touched on today relating to the issue of States' sovereignty over their natural resources are extremely important and are apparent in many of today's regional conflicts, as was rightly noted. Strictly speaking, however, these issues are beyond the scope of the Security Council's remit and belong in the mandates of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Second Committee of the General Assembly. In that regard, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the States Members of the United Nations reaffirmed that each one of them

> "has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity".

Based on that principle, combating illegal activities in the extractive industries is also first of all both the prerogative and the responsibility of the Governments of the countries that own the resources. In that regard, the priority is assisting vulnerable States in strengthening their State institutions and applying sustainable environmental management models in the interests of socioeconomic development and trade.

Resolution 1625 (2005) and presidential statement S/PRST/2007/22 define the parameters for further work aimed at preventing the illegal exploitation of natural resources from fuelling armed conflicts. In our view, however, the Council's task in that regard lies not in conducting generic discussions but in ensuring strict compliance with the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of particular countries and regions. We consider it unacceptable to politicize these issues by artificially assigning them conflict-generator status and thereby creating a basis for potential crises or worsening existing ones. We see many examples of how natural resources can become the object of competition, including in the form of armed confrontations both within and between States. As a rule, we see this kind of issue in countries with weak Government control over national mineral resources. However, armed conflict, whether domestic or international, can exacerbate the problems associated with their illegal exploitation, but we want to emphasize that such clashes are caused not by natural resources per se, but as a result of acts of aggression by various forces, and often external actors.

In such cases, what we could term "delayed-action mines" laid down in colonial times play a significant negative role. Former imperial powers also made use during the Cold War of schemes devised in those far-off times for plundering territories under their control. And in our own era, behind the opposing parties to conflicts we find players from outside the region or global corporations, while loud slogans about the struggle for democratic values are a mere fig leaf for commercially driven efforts to take over one or another country's natural wealth.

We believe that the right way to discuss this topic is in relation to situations in specific countries and regions. For example, the region of the Middle East and North Africa, rich in oil and gas reserves, has always been an area that big States have competed over. The energy issue was a significant contributing factor at the start of the period of shocks prematurely termed the Arab spring. The current crises in Syria and Libya are a clear illustration of the growing link between security and global competition for resources. The so-called international coalition, operating on Syrian land uninvited by the national Government and unsanctioned by the Security Council, has occupied the territory east of the Euphrates where oil and gas fields are located and together with its client structures has established what is essentially shadow hydrocarbon extraction. A policy aimed at reinforcing this state of affairs, violating Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, is being carried out before our very eyes.

After the acts of aggression against Libya in 2011, the country became a springboard for external players' struggle for its rich natural resources, and it is still in a fragmented state to this day, despite all of the efforts of the United Nations to implement a model for a political settlement based on unifying the country and its State institutions. We would really like to see Libya's national wealth serve the interests of ordinary Libyans, not foreign corporations. And we do not have to look very far to find other examples in the Middle East, where we have the destabilization of Iraq due to a foreign invasion in 2003, as well as the war in Yemen. In both those cases, however, it was terrorist forces that at various points in time got access to their natural resources and used hydrocarbons primarily in order to fuel their destructive activities.

One of the reasons for the continuing turbulence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is the illegal exploitation and export of natural resources

in the interests of large transnational companies conducted by illegal armed groups to finance their activities. Suppressing this kind of activity would help to create the conditions for stabilizing the situation in the country and help it to develop.

The question of revenue-sharing from oil and other mineral resources is a serious factor in Somalia's centrifugal tendencies and has been an obstacle to the completion of federalization in Somalia. The agreement signed in June 2018 between Mogadishu and the federal states on the rights to the ownership, management and the sharing of income from the extraction of mineral resources was an important achievement. However, doubts remain about the parties' willingness to comply with those agreements.

The problems involved in controlling natural resources where the demarcation of maritime and land borders is concerned have the potential to become a source of inter-State conflicts, and there are many examples of that in Africa. Take, for instance, the situation concerning the ownership of major oil and gas fields in the coastal areas of the Gulf of Guinea, or the non-recognition of existing borders by the many tribes in the Sahara-Sahel region that have taken up arms to defend their rights to natural resources. The situation in South Sudan is another clear example in which both internal and external players are shamelessly trying to use the country's natural resources to enrich themselves.

The activities of various States and transnational corporations interested in getting access to the resource base of countries of the region is a significant destabilizing factor in a number of Latin American nations. Unfortunately, little has changed there in the twenty-first century, and the situations in Venezuela and Nicaragua are clear proof of that.

We believe it is both dangerous and short-sighted to blame all the problems in countries that are rich in natural resources and that are openly subjected to outside interference and pressure, including through sanctions, on the poor management of those resources. Framing the question that way is one short step from direct military intervention. History can teach us ruthless lessons about that, but there are many who do not want to take those lessons to heart.

The Russian Federation has consistently advocated for the importance of strict respect for States' sovereign right to manage their natural resources. Partnerships for their development should be mutually beneficial and based on unquestioning respect for the sovereignty of the host State. Those who claim the role of peacemaker and friend should have no hidden agendas or desire to take advantage of others' problems for their own mercenary, self-serving interests.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. I would also like to thank the Bolivian presidency for presiding over and convening today's important meeting.

Natural resources are the material basis for human survival and development and an important factor in peace and development for all countries. The illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources, as well as their misuse and unfair distribution, can potentially play a key role in triggering and fuelling conflicts and undermining peace. Security threats such as war, conflicts and terrorism all have roots in poverty and underdevelopment, and solutions to them must be found through development.

In order to address the issue of conflicts caused by the misuse of resources, we must help the countries concerned take full advantage of their natural resources and facilitate their efforts to industrialize and diversify their economies, enabling them to follow their own paths of sustainable development in line with their particular conditions. I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, the international community should respect States' irrevocable sovereignty over their natural resources in their territories, which is indisputable. The proper protection, exploitation and management of natural resources are a sovereign right and obligation. The exploration, development and utilization of natural resources should be decided independently by the Governments and peoples of individual States. Countries in conflict should pay greater attention to the proper use and management of resources, prevent their illicit exploitation and misuse in causing and fuelling armed conflicts, translate their rich resources into development advantages and enable all citizens to benefit from their dividends. In exploiting natural resources, multinational corporations and the private sector should respect the host countries' ownership and work sincerely to meet their corporate social responsibilities and give back to local communities.

Secondly, the Security Council should continue to play a constructive role in that regard, in accordance

with its own responsibilities and strengths. Considering its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should place stronger emphasis on means such as good offices and mediation, focus on preventing and resolving conflicts and work effectively to meet its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Sanctions imposed by the Council are not an end in themselves and should be carefully targeted for a precise impact on organizations engaged in illicit extraction, while minimizing the effects on the normal exploitation conducted by the countries concerned.

Thirdly, the relevant United Nations entities should improve their coordination and work together to help conflict-affected countries to improve their management of resources. When formulating a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy, the Peacebuilding Commission should give greater priority to the management of natural resources in post-conflict reconstruction. United Nations field missions and development agencies should pool their resources and create synergies in order to support countries in conflict in improving their ability to exploit their own natural resources. The United Nations can provide assistance in the proper extraction, transportation and management of natural resources at the request of the countries concerned, and should promote the use of natural resources for sustainable development and social stability in all countries.

Fourthly, regional organizations and relevant mechanisms should play an active role in this area. In recent years, the African Union and other regional and subregional organizations have played an important role in encouraging cooperation among African States in building up their capacity for comprehensive natural-resources management. Mechanisms such as the Kimberley Process have been crucial in curbing the illicit trade in natural resources and should be encouraged to complement the efforts of the United Nations and its Member States and continue to contribute to the consideration and proper use of natural resources.

China is committed to defending and building world peace, based on the principles of equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. China actively supports and helps other countries to properly develop, utilize and manage their natural resources. We consider coordinated economic, social and environmental development very important, as it helps the countries concerned to achieve sustainable development and ensures that local communities benefit. We will work with nations around the world to build a community with a shared future for humankind and leverage the positive role of natural resources in maintaining international peace and promoting common development, so that countries affected by conflict can overcome the curse on their resources as soon as possible, invest their natural resources in their peoples' pursuit of happiness and contribute to world peace and development.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me start by expressing Poland's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his briefing today. We also thank the presidency for recognizing the issue of natural resources in Council discussions of the root causes of conflicts.

While natural resources do not themselves cause wars, the competition for their access, control and illegal exploitation and trafficking can be a driver of armed conflict and play a role in post-conflict situations. On the other hand, we should not forget that natural resources can also create incentives for peacebuilding processes. To begin with, I would like to make few general remarks.

In many parts of the world, we are very concerned to see that access to natural resources and control over them can become a root cause of conflict, and it particularly affects countries that have rich deposits of oil, gas, gold, diamonds or other minerals. Despite their potential for social and economic development, they struggle with poverty, unemployment, epidemics and violence. Weak border controls and poor infrastructure are among the other factors that can aggravate such situations. Moreover, these countries often seem to fail to take into account the negative environmental consequences of their actions. The massive exploitation of natural resources can have a truly negative impact. The international community should not be silent when the environment is devastated, human rights are violated and a country's economic growth and sustainable development are hampered. We should never accept situations in which authoritarian regimes are supported merely to safeguard the interests of armed groups or companies that benefit from lucrative industries.

When considering the role of natural resources in the peace and security agenda, we must consider the issue's complex character and its relation to many other aspects. We believe that our debate must be carefully focused. Respect for international law should be a source of inspiration and a starting point for further

deliberations on the Council's role. That said, I would like to underline the key importance of international law, particularly the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of the sovereignty of States, with regard to the ability to effectively address issues related to the control and illegal exploitation of natural resources and of access to them. We have a variety of international instruments at our disposal within the United Nations system and in the Council in particular. We must consider the full range of development, trade, security and diplomatic tools available.

I want to stress the key importance of transparency, good governance, the rule of law and cooperation in our shared responsibility among a wide range of actors, including regional organizations. While Governments are primarily responsible for controlling the use of natural resources, the engagement of the private sector is also essential. In that regard, I would like to point to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights as examples of global standards and good practices for preventing abuses.

For the Security Council, I want to stress the need for a comprehensive and innovative approach, as the issue of natural resources and conflict concerns the actions of private companies and armed groups as well as Governments. We need an inclusive approach so that civil society and local communities can also be engaged in addressing the issue. The missions and peacekeeping operations of the United Nations and Security Council expert groups and sanctions regimes offer a variety of mechanisms and, as stated in presidential statement S/PRST/2007/22,

> "could play a role in helping the Governments concerned, with full respect for their sovereignty over their natural resources, to prevent the illegal exploitation of those resources from further fuelling the conflict."

In conclusion, while climate change, environment and water scarcity may not be the focus of today's debate, I want to emphasize the important role they play in our peace and security agenda. Today more than ever, the Council should take those issues into consideration, as we see that in many parts of the world climate change and environmental issues can become threat multipliers for conflicts and escalate tensions at the local and regional levels. We are ready to engage in further Council discussions on that issue.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the Bolivian presidency for organizing today's debate on what we consider an essential topic, as well as the Secretary-General for his briefing, which has given us a very informative framework for our discussions.

When we talk about natural resources, we are talking about extractive resources, including fossil fuels and minerals. But it also means soil quality, biodiversity and drinking water, all vital resources that are affected by climate change. Sustainable management of natural resources can and must be a factor in economic development. However, all too often the struggle to control them still helps to trigger, amplify or perpetuate deadly conflicts. In such situations, the challenge is to combine short-term action, which is critical for responding to urgent crises, with long-term efforts to address their root causes, which often include tackling the issue of natural resources. My message today is simple. We must work together to more effectively address this factor in conflict prevention, crisis management and support for political transition processes and sustainable development.

My first point is about prevention. The conditions that lead to conflict over natural resources are well known. When the revenues they generate are poorly distributed, when predators enter the picture, when the management of the companies involved is opaque or the stakeholders are not included enough in the decision-making process or the distribution of resources, the risk of conflict increases. That is true for internal conflicts or those sparked by actors from neighbouring countries. To better identify such precarious situations, we must encourage the sharing of analyses and diagnoses and develop early-warning mechanisms. We therefore call on the Secretariat to integrate the natural-resources dimension into its reports and to find the expertise required for that through the support of the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

Civil society and private actors can also make valuable contributions alongside Governments to improving governance in the exploitation of resources. Voluntary measures to improve revenue transparency are a step in the right direction for that, and here I particularly have in mind the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. Encouraging the contribution

of civil society also means ensuring that advocates for environmental law and sustainable resource management everywhere are free to express themselves and protected against possible attacks. Lastly, we must support the tools of preventive diplomacy in the management of natural resources, such as the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

My second point is about crisis management. When a conflict breaks out, the revenues generated by the illegal exploitation of resources can help it to spread or persist. The Libyan crisis is a good example of that. The predations of the country's natural resources have encouraged many actors to maintain the status quo rather than back the political transition process proposed by Special Representative Ghassan Salamé and supported by the Council. That is also very clear in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, in the predatory activities of armed groups. In all those crises, the war economy is also a lopsided economy that adversely affects the people in two ways — they are deprived of the resources they need for development and they are the primary victims of the continuing conflict. Difficulties in accessing energy and natural resources during conflicts are also a factor in increases in sexual and gender-based violence. For example, women sometimes have to expose themselves to intolerable violence in order to bring home water and essential supplies. South Sudan is a particularly serious example in this respect.

In addition, women's inequitable access to resources hampers not only their empowerment but also the development of the countries concerned. It is therefore our duty to address this issue, as it is a factor in the perpetuation of crises. This we do when we adopt sanctions, in particular when we establish designation criteria linked to the exploitation of natural resources, such as the mechanisms established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Central African Republic. We can and must do more in this area, in particular by ensuring that we recruit specialized experts and by encouraging them to update the local and international intermediary networks that make such traffic possible.

Beyond Council action, the recommendation tools set up by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to encourage multinational companies to adopt a responsible attitude are also very useful. Of course, this responsibility is generally based on central follow-up and transparency capacities. I would also like to laud the valuable contribution made by mechanisms for the certification and follow-up of commodities, such as the one for diamonds created by the Kimberley process, whose chairmanship is held this year by the European Union. We would like to see the gold sector also be subject to a certification framework, in the same spirit of cooperation between public and private actors.

My third and final point relates to post-conflict situations, which also require determined action on our part. Here security-sector reform poses a crucial challenge. In order to prevent and combat the illicit exploitation of natural resources in the long term, we must enhance both the operational effectiveness of the security forces and their transparency and accountability, focusing on this issue in the mandates adopted or renewed by the Council. In addition, when private service providers are charged by the extractive sector with providing site security, regulations must be in place that will ensure their professionalism and their coordination with the public authorities.

Peacekeeping operations can help host countries to strengthen the rule of law and, in so doing, contribute to creating a climate that is conducive to a rational and legal exploitation of natural resources that also takes into account the interest of the population. They will help the host country to exercise its sovereignty in this area as well. In that respect, we must also ensure that the conduct of United Nations staff is beyond reproach.

In post-conflict situations, land and land ownership issues are also very important, as we can see in Darfur. They are key factors in enabling the return of displaced persons and preventing the resurgence of conflict. Conflict prevention also involves recognizing and securing existing and determined property and usage rights, regardless of their origin or nature. We must pay particular attention to ensuring that the land rights of women are upheld, including in post-conflict situations.

Finally, I wish to underline the important role played by the Peacebuilding Commission with respect to countries in post-conflict situations that are dependent on natural resources. It provides an indispensable framework for bringing together all the components of the United Nations system and international financial institutions and for promoting best practices.

In the face of such a complex challenge, mobilization is vital across the board so that natural resources can become a driver of sustainable development rather than

fuel for current and future crises. Mr. President, you can rest assured of France's resolute commitment in this respect.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Like other colleagues, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having brought this subject back to the Security Council's attention. I think that we have heard a lot of common themes today. While natural resources often bring great benefits to a country, they can also contribute to the outbreak of conflict and feed the conflict cycle. We have already heard from other speakers that at least 40 per cent of all intra-State conflicts in the past 60 years have had a link to natural resources, according to the United Nations.

Natural assets that ought to drive domestic economic growth all too often can be subverted and diverted. In Iraq, we have seen how Da'esh used oil resources to fund its campaign of terror. In Libya, competition for control of oil resources remains one of the key drivers of conflict. The trade in diamonds has driven conflicts in countries such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone. I was very interested in what our colleague from Côte d'Ivoire said about the total cost of this being something like $50 billion per year, exceeding aid budgets. That is a very telling figure.

Conversely, resolving disputes over control of natural resources can be a central pillar of peace processes. For example, oil was a crucial element of the peace agreement between Sudan and South Sudan. Beyond oil and diamonds, conflict over land and water resources is a growing risk. Population growth and climate change — and I wish once again to thank the Swedes for their excellent presidency debate on this issue (see S/PV.8307) — threaten to increase competition for natural resources and hence the risk of conflict. Sustainable Development Goal 12 calls for responsible consumption and production, which is integral to reducing the risk of conflict and achieving a sustainable peace.

National responses have, unfortunately, proved insufficient in tackling such complex challenges. We believe that a multilateral approach is critical and needs to be based on international cooperation and respect for the rules-based international system, including the relevant parts of international law.

A number of speakers mentioned sanction regimes, which can provide a useful tool for tackling the role of natural resources in perpetuating conflict. The Council has imposed sanctions on the trade in diamonds in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, and timber, for example, in Liberia. Calibrated sanctions on trading charcoal from Somalia, oil from Libya and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the absolute prohibition of the oil trade with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham all have helped curtail the ability of spoilers to destabilize already fragile situations. But the success of these sanctions regimes, and hence our ability to mitigate or prevent conflict, relies on implementation by not only all Council members but also all of the other States Members of the United Nations.

In United Nations peace operations, our responses should be tailored to the context. We need to pay attention to the underlying causes of conflict, including, where relevant, to support countries in overcoming issues pertaining to the nexus between natural resources and conflict. That said, I just wanted to respond briefly to what the Russian representative said. Not all interventions are driven by negative motivations. It is important that the Council and countries be ready to address crimes against humanity. It is important that they be ready to address grave human rights abuses and important that we be ready to address the imminence of overwhelming humanitarian catastrophes. So I just want to place on record that we reject his descriptions of why Western interventions have been made over the past years.

A number of speakers also mentioned the Council's recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We heard how the illegal exploitation of mineral resources by armed militias in the eastern part of the country is fuelling conflict and imposing suffering on the civilian population. The value of goods smuggled across the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo border exceeds that of formal trade, with gold the most valuable component. So I was very interested in the ideas that the French representative put forward about including gold in an enhanced regime. If we are to end the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we need to see an end to the smuggling of mineral resources. We support the role of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in helping the Government to address that.

We believe that we can also do more to identify and address risks related to natural resources in conflict through early warning systems and efforts to support

countries to alleviate potential triggers. We very much appreciate the work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in this respect. I share the French approbation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. There are also some other ideas that we believe are well worth exploring. Sweden had ideas around tax and audit and tackling organized crime, and China had an interesting idea around using the Peacebuilding Commission. We would be very willing to work with colleagues on the Council to try and advance such instruments.

The Kimberley Process was also raised. The United Kingdom is proud to be a founding member of the Kimberley Process, and we support the current reform process, designed to make the framework even more effective. In addition to the Process, the United Kingdom is committed to strengthening the international framework for regulation of the trade in minerals linked to conflict. I would like to highlight the mining and trading of tin, tantalum, tungsten and, as I have already mentioned, gold. These minerals are key components for modern technology. Under the right conditions, the mining of such minerals can build both prosperity and security for local communities. But otherwise, we end up with deplorable practices — from human rights abuses to the illicit financing of conflict.

We want to help to address such issues. We believe that we should be encouraging compliance with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas. Implementation of this guidance becomes mandatory for the largest importers in the European Union in January 2021, and I can assure the Council that, even after Brexit, the United Kingdom will remain committed to this regulation. We also support the European Partnership for Responsible Minerals, which is a multi-stakeholder initiative comprised of Governments, civil society and the private sector. The Partnership is recognized by the European Union (EU) as an official accompanying measure to the EU regulation.

In conclusion, the role of the Council in tackling the problem of natural resources as a cause of conflict continues to be a very important instrument, which we should ensure that we use to the full.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We thank the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council and Secretary-General Guterres as briefer for drawing our attention to how natural resources have led to intense conflicts, political unrest and even the overthrow of Governments and to the urgent need to take action to maintain not only regional but also international peace and security.

As a Central Asian State, we express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for including in his briefing the comment that our part of the world stands as a good example of progress being achieved through consultations among neighbouring States with the support of the United Nations. As a member observer of the African Union (AU), we fully support and associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African troika. In that regard, we underline the crucial importance of the Arria formula meeting on silencing the guns in Africa and on how the AU partnership can contribute to a continent free of conflict, to be convened on 19 October under the sponsorship of nine Council members, including Kazakhstan. We also emphasize the significance of our President's initiative on building a world free of violent conflicts by the United Nations centenary in 2045, as mentioned in the presidential statement adopted in January (S/PRST/2018/1).

In modern international relations, the lack or abundance of natural resources — food, water, energy, oil and minerals — has taken a high human toll and prolonged tensions through the illegal exploitation of and trafficking in natural resources as well as their illicit trade, which are exacerbated not only by Governments but also by extractive industries of foreign or multinational origin, wealthy exploiters and even armed groups and militias to the detriment of local populations, as well as causing dire humanitarian consequences. Natural resources often lie at the heart of wars and civil unrest. The growing scarcity of resources can become an increasingly serious problem in the coming decades. In addition, the potential consequences of climate change for water availability, food security, the prevalence of disease, coastal boundaries and population distribution may aggravate existing tensions and generate new conflicts. The high demand for energy carriers to serve an expanding global population of more than 9 billion people by 2050 may raise the issue of accessibility to global energy supplies. Such a situation may provoke tensions between States, which will inevitably keep our world from becoming a better and safer place for succeeding generations, as evoked by the Charter of the United Nations.

The exploitation of natural resources must be accompanied by increased capacity-building of populations and contribute to the development of the economy in general. Otherwise, it will lead to the impoverishment of populations and the struggle for control over resources as a means of profit. This perspective applies to both local and foreign companies. In this context, Kazakhstan is a good example of a responsible State. Because we have sovereignty over our natural resources, we attract foreign investors on mutually beneficial terms and diversify the economy to fully meet the needs of the population. Changing this equitable paradigm would lead to instability and conflict.

As mentioned today by the Secretary-General, and according to the United Nations Environment Programme, more than 40 per cent of internal conflicts over the past 60 years have been linked to the exploitation of natural resources. In this vein, Kazakhstan views energy security as an instrumental factor in international stability. In our opinion, there are numerous and complex factors, including political, social and economic aspects, that remain key drivers of conflict. Natural resources alone are not the only determinant in the sorrowful equation of war and conflicts on the one hand and people's lives on the other.

The dispute over the control of natural resources has always been on the international agenda. The advantage we have today, in comparison to past millenniums, is the United Nations.

My country strongly advocates respect for the sovereignty of States over their natural resources, which is of crucial importance for the African continent, above all, as we witnessed during our recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, since the international community is also concerned by environmental degradation and the illegal exploitation of natural resources, a coordinated global approach is also required. Member States, together with the United Nations, must be at the forefront of the preservation of peace and the fair use of natural resources under the pillars of the United Nations — peace and security, sustainable development, humanitarian action —and in accordance with international law. We need to catalyse new thinking, reform and processes in each of the pillars, which, together with technical analysis and capacity-building, could become self-sustaining, and which partners and beneficiaries could scale up.

As with sustainable development generally, addressing issues of natural resources also requires a collective management system. This point was stressed in the high-level independent reports on peace operations and the peacebuilding architecture. Nowadays, contributing to the conservation of natural resources is an important part of the mandates of peacekeeping operations. We therefore support the wise vision that win-win solutions to today's conflicts should be found through development.

It is also highly necessary today to strengthen coordination among United Nations specialized agencies and programmes so as to render their work more efficient and practical and help them improve State mechanisms for managing natural resources in countries affected by conflict. The capacity of the United Nations to provide technical information on the status of natural resources and the environment, as well as to make recommendations on their sustainable use during mediation processes, should be further strengthened.

Since we have only one planet, we think that, as an integral part of its peacekeeping mandate, the Security Council needs to address the issue of natural resources and environmental impacts in the light of their great potential for fuelling conflicts. Environmental issues can therefore serve as an effective platform or catalyst for enhancing dialogue, building confidence, taking advantage of shared interests and broadening cooperation between divided groups, as well as among States.

Finally, we must always remember that it is people who are vulnerable and who suffer disproportionately in conflicts of any size or of any cause. International impunity nurtures this problem. Kazakhstan believes that a more equitable and balanced global partnership will provide a solid foundation for overall sustainable peace and development.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.